

PEARSON STEALS THE LIMELIGHT

By MICHAEL KNOX Wycombe Wanderers 2, Spennymoor 1

TWO goals in a dazzling four minute period mid-way through the second half took Wycombe Wanderers to a deserved friendly victory at Loakes Park on Friday night when Rothmans Northern League side Spennymoor United were beaten 2-1.

After disappointing first half during which the visitors took a 1-0 lead, Wycombe turned on the style in the final 45 minutes, which suggested they could be in for another fine season.

The performance was all the more encouraging when it is considered that manager Ted Powell was fielding an experimental and makeshift side in the hope of sifting through the talent at his disposal.

This match went some way to answering Powell's questions. New signing Ian Pearson is certainly an outstanding acquisition, Alan Davies can add a certain flair to the mid-field while experienced striker George Cleary should be a regular scorer once he settles down.

Wanderers started the match with some attractive short passing as they weaved pretty patterns over the immaculate Loakes Park pitch. But apart from Glen Swaby's deflected shot which struck a post, they rarely looked like scoring against a solid Spennymoor defence.

Indeed it was the visitors, with mid-field control, who dictated the match for long periods in the first half and they took the lead after 16 minutes through their former England amateur international Kenny Banks.

Banks, a constant threat, collected a neat short pass from Hickman on the edge of the penalty area, and steadied himself before sending a low shot past the diving Peter Spittle. This was a coolly taken goal and Wanderers must have been relieved in the 28th minute when Banks had to limp from the field with an injured right ankle.

This was the turning point of the game for Spennymoor who rarely threatened danger once Banks had left the scene. His mantle was taken by Ian Pearson, whose unselfish running and passing set up chances for his colleagues. He laid off one ball to Howard Kennedy who rocketed a shot over the bar.

Manager Powell made one change to the Wanderers' line-up during the interval — and it proved a significant one. Bobby Davies was replaced at left-back by his namesake Alan, normally a mid-field player. But it was the subsequent switching of Alan Davies for John Priestley, who went to left-back, that sent Wycombe into top gear.

Pearson, with more freedom, continually got to the bye-line before sending over a series of dangerous crosses. One went straight to Jimmy Cox at the far post but the young college player sent his header the wrong side of the woodwork.

On the hour Swaby forced a fine save out of Rowell with a long range shot from Kennedy's

corner, but this was one of the few bright spots in a disappointing display by Swaby who wanted more time than the Spennymoor players were prepared to give him.

He was replaced in the 67th minute by Tony Horseman and within 30 seconds Wycombe were on level terms — but 'Bodger' could claim no credit for the goal. Kennedy's corner to the near post found Keith Mead who somehow threaded a header through a posse of players and past the unsighted Rowell.

This was the confidence booster Wycombe needed and four minutes later they snatched the lead. A brilliant build-up ended with Pearson firing a low shot across the goalmouth from the bye-line and Alan Davies flicked it home from close range.

Pearson, whose display did

much to restore Wycombe's fortunes, so nearly scored the goal he deserved in the 75th minute. Cox, whose confidence grew the longer the match progressed, pushed through a brilliant pass to Pearson. With only the goalkeeper to beat, he struck the ball against Rowell's feet and the danger was cleared.

WYCOMBE: P. Spittle; P. Birdseye, R. Davies (sub: A. Davies 45 mins), K. Mead, A. Phillips, J. Cox, G. Swaby (sub: A. Horseman 67 mins), H. Kennedy, G. Cleary, I. Pearson, J. Priestley. Subs: J. Maskell, R. Best, A. Hughes (not used).

SPENNYMOOR: S. Rowell; M. Pearson, P. Adams, A. Hickman, W. Robson, B. Mulligan, T. Hunter, D. Curry, K. Banks (sub: P. Hillis 28 mins), K. Reilly, K. Batey. Sub: D. Sill (not used).

Half-time 0-1. **Scorers:** Wycombe: Mead (68 mins), A. Davies (72 mins); Spennymoor: Banks (16 mins).

Referee: E. Graham (High Wycombe). **Attendance:** 350.